

May 8, 2013

## The Life of the Rev. Steve Swenson



- The Rev. Steve Swenson, 63, Fairhope, AL, and formerly of Groton, and Bristol, died on April 28, 2013 from unknown causes. He was found dead in his home.
- Steve was born May 16, 1949 to Elden and Jean Swenson in Watertown, he graduated from Watertown High School in 1967 and from Augustana College, Sioux Falls, in 1971.
- At the age of 14, he started a career in broadcasting in Watertown. Steve attended Luther Seminary in St. Paul, Minn., and his first parish was in Orient, SD, where he served from 1975 to 1978. He then served as pastor at Trinity Lutheran Church in

Edgemont from 1978 to 1981.

- Steve attended Notre Dame in 1981 and 1982 where he graduated with a Master's Degree in Liturgical Studies, which is a history study of Christian and Jewish worship through the centuries.
- He then served as senior pastor at First English Lutheran Church, South Bend, Ind., from 1982 to 1992. He was called to be the senior pastor at King of Glory in Indianapolis from 1992 to 1995.
- According to a report from KELO-Land News, "He's being called the 'People's Pope', seen by millions during his many trips around the world. Some actually had a personal audience with the Pontiff, including a long time Lutheran minister from Groton.
- "Steve Swenson spent 30 years as a Lutheran minister before retiring and entering the newspaper business with his wife Stacy. But more than ten years ago, the Lutheran church sent him to Vatican City to reopen the lines of communication between Lutherans and Catholics, which have been severed for centuries.
- "It was a chance meeting that even Swenson calls stunning.
- "As millions of people walk slowly past the body of Pope John Paul II, Steve Swenson of Groton is reminded of a similar walk he took through the halls of St. Peters Basilica on his way to meet the Holy Father in 1994.
- "Swensen said, "I remember his taking my hand and looking into my eye's as if I were the only human being on earth."
- "Swenson, then a minister of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America, met with the Pope as a leader in the Church, but was left speechless in his presence.
- "Swensen said, "You almost go into a kind of semi shock experience, it is so

overwhelming."

- "Swenson along with other members of the Lutheran church met with the Pope on bridging the gap between two religions. But it was small talk that built a bond between the two religious figures.
- "Swensen said, "Somebody had told him that I had gone to Notre Dame for graduate school and he got a hold of that one and that, of course, was how he identified me. And he said, I see that you had to go to Notre Dame to get a good Catholic education."
- "They were fond memories Swenson says will always be a highlight in his life. "It struck me because you can not help but love John Paul the second and I loved him and I only knew him for a short time."
- "While Swensen was in awe of John Paul the second, his meetings with the Pope did prove fruitful."
- Swenson also became very good friends with Joseph Ratzinger, who later became Pope Benedict XVI.
- He was employed secularly from 1995 to 1997 where he worked as a director of advertising for a radio station, he worked in television and also for Notre Dame Public Radio.
- South Dakota ELCA Bishop Andrea Nesdahl DeGroot then drafted Swenson to become the pastor at Emmanuel Lutheran Church in Groton in 1997 as Emmanuel Lutheran became a solo congregation. He served the Groton congregation until 2003.
- He is survived by his wife Stacy Swenson (married in 2003 in Groton), Yakima, Wash., step sons, Alex Bretsch, Frederick; and Jordan Seaman, Fargo; one son, Tim Swenson of Fairhope, AL; one daughter, Karissa Coggins of Indianapolis, IN; one sister, Sue Boynton of Aberdeen, S.D; four grandchildren, Will, Connor, Izabel and Nathan; other relatives and friends.
- He was preceded in death by his parents.
- Inurnment will be in Watertown Cemetery, S.D.